

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) A method for manufacturing molten iron, comprising the steps of:

producing a an iron-containing mixture ~~containing iron~~ by drying and mixing particles of iron-containing ores and additives;

passing the iron-containing mixture ~~containing iron~~ through one or more successively-connected fluidized beds in the presence of reducing gas so that the mixture is reduced and calcined to thereby ~~perform conversion~~ be converted into a reduced material;

forming a coal packed bed, which is a heat source in which the reduced material has been melted;

charging the reduced material to the coal packed bed and supplying oxygen to the coal packed bed to manufacture iron; and

supplying reduced gas exhausted from the coal packed bed to the fluidized bed,

~~wherein in the step of converting the mixture to a reduced material, in~~
in converting the iron-containing mixture to a reduced material, directly supplying and
combusting oxygen is directly supplied to and in the fluidized bed and combusted in
an area to which where reduced reducing gas flows to the fluidized bed during the
conversion of the mixture to a reduced material in the fluidized bed.

2. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein in ~~the step of~~
converting the iron-containing mixture ~~containing iron~~ to a reduced material, water is supplied separately from oxygen supply combustion process and is mixed with the oxygen.

3. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 2, wherein the water is one of process water and steam.

4. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 2, wherein the water is supplied at a rate of 300~500 Nm³/hr.

5. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the oxygen is supplied and combusted in the case where an internal temperature of a fluidized-bed is 650 degrees Centigrade or higher.

6. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein ~~the step of~~ converting the iron-containing mixture ~~containing iron~~ to a reduced material comprises ~~the steps of~~:

(a) pre-heating the iron-containing mixture ~~containing iron~~ in a first fluidized bed;

(b) transferring the pre-heated iron-containing mixture to a second fluidized bed;

(~~b~~c) performing preliminary reduction of the pre-heated iron-containing mixture ~~containing iron~~ in a second fluidized bed; and

(d) transferring the preliminary reduced iron-containing mixture to a third fluidized bed;

(~~e~~e) performing final reduction of the iron-containing mixture ~~containing iron~~ that has undergone preliminary reduction in the third fluidized bed to thereby realize conversion into the reduced material,

wherein the oxygen is directly supplied and combusted in ~~the steps of~~ (a) and (~~b~~c).

7. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 6, wherein oxygen is supplied and combusted ~~immediately prior to~~ in steps (a**b**), (b**d**), and wherein other

oxygen is supplied to the reduced gas and combusted before the reduced gas is supplied to the third fluidized bed (e).

8. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 7, wherein water is supplied separately from the supply and combustion of the oxygen.

9.-16. (Canceled)